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ABSTRACT

A career training program funded by the Job Training Partnership Act was developed in Loudon County, Tennessee, to alleviate the stresses that are described in the hypothesis that occupational aspirations and expectations are lower for rural, female, economically disadvantaged, and handicapped youth than they are for other youth. To participate, students had to be from a family living below current poverty levels or have a handicapping condition, registered at one of three county high schools and enrolled in a vocational class, age 16 or older, able to read at grade 5 or 6 level, willing to attend/participate in class sessions, and willing to take all pre/post tests. In groups of 9 or 10, students attended 2-hour sessions for 36 weeks and met for at least 4 individual conferences. After assessment and maturity, and basic education competencies. Students were evaluated by the career training instructor, vocational instructor, and employer on a monthly basis. In 3 years, the program has served a total of 170 students, 143 of whom were seniors and/or had been in school 12 or more years. Follow-up of 2-year participants revealed that at 90 or 180 days, 68% retained their initial jobs or moved up to better positions. One year after program exit, 86% were employed. (NEC)

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CAREER TRAINING: STRATEGIES FOR TRAINING DISADVANTAGED, RURAL YOUTH

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CAREER TRAINING: STRATEGIES FOR TRAINING DISADVANTAGED, RURAL YOUTH

"When I grow up, I want to be an astsronaut, or a police officer, or a doctor," These are commonly heard occupational aspirations of young children. They are unrealistic and are seldom based on any thought as to the individual's abilities, values or resources.

Research studies consistently show (Mote, 1981):
**Rural residence restricts occupational expectations.
**The lower the socioeconomic status a youth comes from, the higher the correlation is with low level occupational choices.
**A strong positive relationship exists between achievement level in high school and occupational choice.
**Females show a more limited range of occupational choices and lower occupational expectations than do males.

Rural and disadvantaged youth tend to make early job choices. Emphasis on the future may force a career decision before a person is developmentally able to make a wise choice. Early choices may then put a ceiling on the individual's aspirations and limit the range of career interest. Going into a job that is below one's capabilities is not satisfying. The temporary satisfaction a young person may derive from a first job, earning money and being independent may soon be overshadowed by the knowledge that the only job for which they qualifty is boring. Likewise a person who aspires to a career that is beyond his capabilities may feel frustrated when he cannot achieve his goals or guilty when he realizes he cannot measure up to his expectations.

Are high school students capable of making realistic occupational choices? We believe the answer to be yes, if students have objective information about themselves that they can use when making occupational choices. This information includes knowledge of one's abilities, interest, work values and physical and psychological characteristics.

The program was based on the following hypothesis. Occupational aspirations and expectations are lower for rural, female, economically disadvantaged, and handicapped youth than they are for other youth. Youth from these categories tend to have low self esteem, an external locus of control, a different work value orientation, an unrealistic attitude toward the world of work, and a lack of occupational information. They make lower grades in school and complete less years in high school and post-secondary education than their peers (Mote, 1982).

A program designed to alleviate these stresses was developed. The program was funded by the Job Training Partnership Act. It serves youth from the 3 high schools in Loudon County, Tennessee.

Loudon County is a rural county located south of Knoxville, Tennessee, with a population of less than 25,000. Although Knoxville is one of the larger metropolitan areas in the South and is easily accessible to this population; few choose to avail themselves of the educational or vocational opportunities located in Knoxville. This refusal to utilize resources in urban areas is a common trait in rural Appalachia.

The career training program has now been in place for three years and has been funded for the fourth year. It has served 170 (55 to 65 per year) students during this period. The majority of these students, 143, were Seniors and/or had been in school 12 or more years.

In order to participate in the program students had to meet certain requirements. These were:

1. Be certified as meeting one of the two criteria by Tennessee Employment Security:
   A. Students and/or their families were living on incomes below the current poverty level. (Family of 4 = $11,240).
   B. Students had a handicapping condition that would put them at a disadvantage in securing and/or keeping a job.
2. Be registered at one of the three high schools in the county and be enrolled in a vocational class at the Loudon County Vocational Center.
3. Be 16 years of age or older.
4. Be able to read at the fifth-sixth grade level.
5. Agree to attend and participate, to the best of their abilities, in the class sessions.
6. Agree to take all pre and post tests.

The delivery model used with the Career Training program included both individual and group sessions. Group sessions were scheduled for six groups of nine to ten students for a two hour session each week for thirty-six weeks. Individual sessions were of both a planned and an impromptu nature. Four planned individual conferences were scheduled for all students. Impromptu sessions were scheduled by the instructor, the psychologist or the students on an as needed basis.

All students were assessed during the first weeks of the program each year. A number of assessments were conducted. The assessments measured occupational information, realistic attitude toward work, work values, aptitudes,, locus of control, self concept, personality and occupational survival skills.

An Individual Career Training Plan and specific objectives for each student were made based upon these assessments and the intake interview. This plan was made during the first individual conference.

Each individual was expected to master specific competencies. The core competencies were divided into three areas: pre-employment, work maturity and basic education. The following are the core competencies used in the program.

Pre-employment Skills: The particpant will:

1. Participate in a self assessment.
2. Improve their Self Esteem.
3. Improve their Internal Control.
4. Explore, read, and learn about careers.
5. Use data from test in preparing career paths.
6. Identify 5 or more ways to locate information on jobs.
7. Use occupational information housed in classroom.
8. Complete an ICTP.
9. Name 5 occupations of interest to self.
10. Prepare a career path for 4 of these occupations.
11. Evaluate these occupations for self.
12. Verbalize one or two paths; their pros and cons based on personal values, goals, interests, and abilities.
13. Identify 10 skills which he/she possesses.
14. Read clock and keep work hours.
15. Figure weekly earnings.
16. Read a pay check stub.
17. Make out a check.
18. Cash a pay check.
19. Fill out W-4 form.
20. Identify fringe benefits and their financial value.
21. Fill out 3 applicaiton blanks.
22. Write a letter applying for a job.
23. Prepare a qualification brief.
24. Make an appointment for an interview, simulated.
25. Hold simulated job interview.
26. Identify 5 methods for locating employers.
27. Identify and list 5 employers in this area for people in your career field.
28. Contact 2 "real" employers for job interviews.
29. Hold 2 "real" interviews.
30. List and discuss 10 reasons why people "get hired."
31. List 10 reasons why people "get fired" from jobs.
32. Show an increased knowledge of the world of work and occupational information.
33. Be able to identify 3-5 occupations showing a declining employment rate.
34. Identify 3 or more public and government agencies that help employers with work related problems.
35. Be able to identify 3-5 occupations which are showing increased employment.
36. Be able to identify 3-5 occupations showing a declining

employment rate.

37. Can discuss the role of the JTPA on our labor market and economy.
38. Have a knowledge of labor unions and their role in the United State.
39. Identify 5 or more local employers of persons in your field career.
40. Explore "why people work."
41. Verbalize ways in which work affects lifestyle.
42. Identify decision making strategies.
43. Be able to verbally use decision making strategies.
44. Apply decison making strategies to work problems.

Work Maturity

1. Be able to understand the importance of having and using effective oral communications in the work place.
2. Be able to understand the importance of having and using effective writing skills in the work place.
3. Be able to interpret body language and its effect on listener and/or communicator.
4. Show good attendance and punctual behaviors.
5. Understands the importance of and demonstrates the ability to manage time and materials effectively.
6. Understand the importance of having and using basic arithmetic skills in the work force.
7. Be able to work cooperatively in classes.
8. Have the health; physical, mental, and emotional, required for persons in his career area.
9. Demonstrate an understanding of the importance of maintaining an acceptable level of personal hygiene.
10. Be able to work without close or constant supervision.
11. Be able to understand the importance of and can demonstrate the ability to follow instructions.
12. Understand the importance of and can demonstrate the ability to use safety regulations.
13. Understand the importance of and can demonstrate the ability to cooperate with peers and sinstructors.
14. Understand the importance of and can demonstrate the ability to use the materials, equipment and information for his career (high school or entry level skill).
15. Be able to define his strengths and weakness as to work in a general sense and in a particular career.
16. Understand the importance of knowing what is expected (normal operating procedures) of him and demonstrates this knowledge.
17. Understand the importance of and demonstrates the ability to be loyal to a group or organization.
18. Understand the importance of and demonstrates the ability to make independent decisions.

19. Understand the importance of and demonstrates the ability to function within an organization.
20. Understand the importance of and demonstrate the ability to organize the work activities of others.
21. Understand the importance of and demonstrates the ability to use his initiative and imagination in work related situations.
22. Understand the importance of and demonstrates the ability to work under tension and pressure and cope with conflict.
23. Demonstrate the ability to adapt to varying work situations.

Basic Education

1. Make progress toward and/or complete requirements for a high school diploma, certificate and/or G.E.D.
2. Be able to list secondary training opportunities in East Tennessee.
3. Be able to identify training and/or education needed in their career field.
4. Be able to relate the importance of education and training to personal career goals.
5. Be able to list the positive and negative aspects, from a personal standpoint, of pursuing furthur education.

The curriculum was based on these competencies. Students were allowed to move through the training on an individual basis. For example, if a student completed his applications before the class was over, he could move on to other competencies or use the resource room. The resource room contains a wide variety of occupational information and was open throughout the year. The following is the curriculum outline used in the program.

Week 1 (3 Hours)
Certification.
Overview of JTPP.
Week 2 (2 Hours)
Group Assessment: Hall (1971), Profile, Self Concept (Rosenberg) Locus of Control (Rotter,1966), & Occupational Survival Skills.
Week 3 (5 Hours)
Group Assessment: ASVAB (1978), Career Maturity Inventory (Crites).
Week 4 (2 Hours)
"How to Relate Needs, Interest, and Apptitudes to Jobs" (Career), 3 Filmstrips and Worksheets.
Week 5 (2 Hours)
Interpretation of Assessments, Individual Career Training Plan.
Week 6 (2 Hours)
Using Printed Occupational Information, Career Paths.
Week 7 (2 Hours)
Career Paths.
Week 8 (2 Hours)

The Workbook (Farr, 1983): Employer Expectation. Data Trak.

Week 9 (2 Hours)
The Workbook : Applications.

Week 10 (2 Hours)
The Workbook : Applications. Want Ads, Agencies.

Week 10 (3 Hours)
Proficiency Studython.

Week 11 (2 Hours)
The Workbook . Resumes.

Week 12 (3 Hours)
Career Day.

Week 13 (2 Hours)
Time Cards & Paychecks (McDonel, 1981).

Week 14 (2 Hours)
Labor Union, Economics of Capitalism, JTPA, Fringe Benefits.

Week 15 (2 Hours)
Decision Making.

Week 16 (2 Hours)
Communications: Verbal & Body.

Week 17 (2 Hours)
Communications: Written & Listening.

Week 18 (2 Hours)
Interviewing.

Week 19 (2 Hours)
Interviewing.

Week 20 (2 Hours)
On-the-Job Survival Skills (Como, 1983): Motivation, Initiative, Adaptive.

Week 21 (2 Hours)
On-the-Job Survival Skills : Punctuality, Reliability, Dependability, Responsibility.

Week 22 (2 Hours)
On-the-Job Survival Skills : Working in Organizations, Accepting Authority, Health & Safety.

Week 23 (2 Hours)
On-the-Job Survival Skills : Personal Hygiene, Personal Relations, Honesty.

Week 24 (2 Hours)
"Me and Jobs" (Hooker, 1984). Film Strips and Workbook.

Week 25 (2 Hours)
"Me and Jobs". Film Strips and Workbook.

Week 26 (2 Hours)
Job Search Education (Kimeldorf, 1985): What Am I Worth? Exploring What's Out There.

Week 27 (2 Hours)
Job Search Education : The Campaign.

Week 28 (2 Hours)
Job Search Education : My Campaign. Networking. JIST Cards.

Week 29 (2 Hours)
Studython For Proficiency.

Week 30 (2 Hours)
Get Hired (Anema, 1978): Group Interaction, Plays, Buzz Groups.
Week 31 (2 Hours)
Get Hired . (Continued)
Week 32 (2 Hours)
Don't Get Fired Anema, 1979): Group Interaction, Plays, Buzz Groups.
Week 33 (2 Hours)
Don't Get Fired.
Week 34 (2 Hours)
Post Testing.
Week 35 (2 Hours)
Post Testing.
Week 36 (2 Hours)
Progressing On the Job.

This schedule does not reflect individual conferences, and field trips.

These educational services will also be provided in the training:

1. Profiles will be prepared for each participant. These profiles will include test scores, stated job interest and educational plans. These profiles will be used in making the Individual Career Training Plan. Profiles wll be made during August and September for each student.
2. The instructor will write an Individual Career Training Plan for each student during the first 3 months of the program. This plan will be based on assessed aptitudes, skills and interest; conferences with teachers, and conferences with each individual participant.
3. All tests administered to the students will be interpreted to the students before the profiles and ICTP's are completed. The profile will be filled out by each student. The Job Training Plan will be written with the student during individual conferences. Students will become more knowledgeable and realistic about themselves.
4. A resource room containing occupational information will be available throughout the year for use by individuals or groups of students.
5. Simulated and real work activities will be a major portion of each class period. Behaviors will be defined, analyzed and discussed.
6. Parents, teachers, school administrators, local employers and employees will be encouraged to participate in the training.
7. Specialized instructions in specific areas will be offered to small groups or individuals on an as-needed basis.
8. Students will be taught responsible work habits.
9. Students' records will be maintained in an accurate and confidential manner.
10. Evaluation of the program will be maintained through recording of the accomplishments of each student on his Career Training Plan.

Records were maintained on each student. These records were kept on the Career Training Plans and the Student Profile. Objectives and competencies were checked off as attained. The students were evaluated by the career training instructor, the vocational instructor and the employer on a monthly basis. These evaluations were kept in the student's files. Any evaluation carrying a rating of less than satisfactory was cause for an individual conference.

The research component of the training program was multifaceted. It included pre and post testing and follow up contacts at 90 and 180 days after exit. In addition, during the first year, comparisons with a control group in an adjacent county were made.

Several of the assessments were given at entrance and exit from the program. Assessments at entrance revealed a low self esteem, an external locus of control, a work value orientation very different from the national norm; a lack of occupational information; an unrealistic attitude toward the world of work; and a very low achievement level in high school.

The Armed Forces Vocational Aptitude Battery (1978) was administered to the students in September of each year. Our students scored significantly below the national average. Less than 20% of our students have had scores high enough for entrance into the military service.

The students were given the Career Maturity Inventory (Crites, 1978) in September and May of each year. This inventory was used to assess the participants knowledge of career information and realistic attitude toward work. In the Fall all scores were below the thirtieth percentile while in the Spring the mean scores had jumped to the seventieth percentile. This is over a thirty percent increase.

Rosenberg's (1979) Self Esteem Scale was administered in the Fall and Spring of each year. The scale measures a person's feeling about himself. Scores may range from a low of 1.00 to a high of 4.00. In September our mean score was 2.09. In May this score jumped 38% to 3.63.

Rotter's (1966) I-E Locus of Control Scale was administered at entrance and exit from the program. Scores may range from .001 to .999. The higher scores represent external control. Our students' mean score in September was .676. External control is associated with helplessness; it engenders "Why bother to try" feelings. The mean score for our students in May was .363. This reflects a much more internalized control; an "I am in control" feeling.

Hall's (1971) Occupational Orientation Inventory was administered to the students in September of each year. The highest work values desired by our group of students were: "Belongingness, Avoidance of Risk, and Make Money".This is not surprising considering the psychological and economic background of our population. But, it is unusual. A normative group of young adults would be more apt to value "Creativity, Personal Satisfaction, or Self Actualization".

The achievement level for our students is very low. During the three years

our program has been in place 33% (56 students), had failed to pass the Tennessee High School Proficiency Test. In Tennessee, a student must pass this test in order to receive a high school diploma. A student has 5 chances in high school to pass this test, two of these testings are during the twelth grade. After our tutorial sessions, 45 of these students passed the proficiency. Five of the remaining eleven took and passed the GED Test. This left only 3% (6) of our students who have not graduated from high school or received a GED.

Follow up contacts on participants during the first two years at 90 and 180 days revealed that 68% of these students had retained their initial jobs; or moved up to better positions. Follow up contacts, one year after exit, revealed that the first participants enjoyed an even higher rate of employment. Eighty-six percent of the participants were now employed. This jump, we believe, can best be explained by the students' knowledge of how to acquire a job.

Follow up on the third year participants will again be conducted in September, 1986 and January, 1987. Data at exit for these participants revealed 83% placement. The form used for follow up contacts will be available at the presentation.

The data on the control group was of a different nature. Twenty percent dropped out of school during the year, and another 10% who had failed to meet graduation requirements told us they would not return to school in the Fall. Only 6% had jobs which they would begin immediately after graduation. This was not surprising considering that slightly less than 40% had ever filled out a job application. Ninety and 180 day contacts revealed less than 18% employment for this group.

Our hypothesis was proved; but, after three years we believe that we have shown that it need not be so. When provided with a supportive environment these youth also grow in self esteem and knowledge, come to believe in their own powers and begin to look at the world in a more realistic manner. The poverty cycle has been broken for these students. They are now productive citizens.

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